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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

JUST as the retrospect of last month was closing, an account was received that Thomas Kirwan, one of the Catholic delegates had been convicted by the verdict of a jury in the Court of King's Bench. Sir Charles Saxton on behalf of the Castle appears to have been actively engaged in relation to the return of the pannel, and although the triers appointed by the court decided against the challenge, suspicions will not be easily effaced from the public mind. The fountain of justice should be pure, and free from all suspicion of any interference polluting, or muddying the stream. There is now the decision of one jury, against another, and the question of law on the construction of the convention act remains yet to be decided in the dernier resort, to which we are told that steps are taking in the course of legal procedure to bring the decision of the case. Thus amusement and profit are afforded to the lawyers, but the people stand looking on with apathy. If they were aroused to a sense of the duty they owe to themselves and their country, they would, Catholics and Protestants, petition for a repeal of the convention act, which passed in bad times, resulted from the intemperate councils of a Fitzgibbon, and is an infringement on the liberty of the subject.

This straight-forward course would be preferable to losing time in making legal distinctions on the meaning of an act, which ought to be removed from the statute book. When Thomas Kirwan was called up to receive the judgment of the court, he was fined a mark, and discharged, and a *Noli Prosequi* entered on the proceedings against the other delegates. To what motives these appearances of lenity are to be attribu-

ted, whether to timidity, or an artful policy remains to be developed by succeeding events. It would be happy for the country if they were produced by a real spirit of conciliation.

Motions for a committee to inquire into the state of Ireland were brought forward in the house of Lords by Earl Fitzwilliam, and in the Commons by Lord Morpeth, and negatived by sweeping majorities. Little new came out in the course of the debates. The Duke of Bedford in his speech gave a clear explanation of the causes which operated against the more liberal intentions of the administration of 1806, of which he formed a part, and these obstructions counteract, most probably, even the private sentiments of the Duke of Richmond. The bigotted portion of the Protestants of Ireland, who besiege the Castle, obstruct what Englishmen not imbibed by the acrimony of the Orange-Irish system would be willing to grant, if not in the liberal spirit of unreserved concession, at least in a disposition of partial conciliation. An Irish party exists more hostile to the interests of Ireland, than the men who are delegated from England to govern this country. This party appear to force the administration into their measures, and bargain for the retention of their ill gotten, and ill exercised power, by compromises to carry through the business of government, if they are gratified in the possession of their self-interested and exclusive monopoly.

It would not be surprising, if on his return to England, the Duke of Richmond, should like the Earl of Hardwicke, support that emancipation, which in his official situation he has been forced to oppose.

It has been asserted that in Eng-

land, there is a party behind the throne, greater than the throne itself. So in Ireland a party rises superior to vice-regal authority, and influences the councils of the government. The persons assuming in England, the name of the King's friends, and in Ireland of the Protestant ascendancy, both claiming for interested purposes a title to exclusive loyalty, form a dangerous and mischievous faction in the state.

In the debate in the house of Lords, the Marquis of Wellesley held a convenient language to be interpreted hereafter as existing circumstances may render expedient, and *double tongued* Canning in the Commons, spoke in favour of the Catholic claims, but consistently with himself, voted against them. The Marquis avowed, that all restrictions on a people on account of their religious opinions were in themselves an evil, but he contrived to fritter away the force of this principle so just in the abstract by casuistical explanations. The stale pretext that this was not the proper time, was again brought forward by Lord Castlereagh, and others. With men in the possession of power, or looking to get into power, the present time is never the season for reform or the beneficial removal of old prejudices.

Rumours are industriously kept afloat that there is a plot in existence against Protestants. We disbelieve the fact. Let legal evidence be brought forward in a court of justice, and unequivocally substantiated against the parties accused. Such a step would be more manly, than by surmises to whisper away the reputation of a whole people, and excite prejudices against them to operate injuriously to the admission of their just claims.* Schemies

to alarm the fears of Protestants have been frequently brought forward critically at the period of the Catholic claims being submitted to the legislature. Let the guilty few, if there are any, be known, and punished, but let not loose obloquy be thrown on a whole people. The Earl of Fingall, and other Catholics, highly to their credit, have informed government of some obscure

county, through a portion of the county of Down, to excite prejudices against the Catholics: a fact we can substantiate if we are called upon for that purpose. We decidedly believe that such an oath has not been taken by the parties accused, and we insert it in this place to show our abhorrence of a plan to defame our country, and as far as we can to counteract the scheme to promote prejudice by an infamous trick. This opinion we shall resolutely maintain until we find the contrary is clearly proved in a court of justice.

If a magistrate has procured such a paper, by a discovery of its having been taken by any people, let him manfully bring the offenders to trial. Unless this step is taken, we shall consider it as a foul calumny, calculated for the purpose of obstructing Catholic emancipation, and a copy of this oath having been circulated about the same time in different places by the emissaries of the opposers of Catholic claims, adds to our suspicions.

"I, A.B. do swear, in the presence of you my brethren, by the \pm of St. Peter, and of our Blessed Lady, that I will aid and support our Holy Religion by destroying the *Hereticks*, and as far as my power and my property will go, *not one shall be excepted*, and also, that I will assist my Brothers in every undertaking against the *Hereticks*, so commonly called, by our Holy Fathers. I do further swear, that I will be ready in twelve hours warning, to put our glorious design in execution against the *Hereticks of every sect*.

"So help me, God. By the \pm of St. Peter."

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing. *Isaiah, C. 35, V. 5—6.*"

* The following oath has been industriously circulated by a Magistrate of the

organization of a treasonable plan, but until the business is fully brought forward by a trial of the persons accused, the public have no means of judging of the extent or nature of the business, or of its secret springs.

The commotions at present existing in a portion of the county of Down appear to be greatly exaggerated by party misrepresentations. If they are narrowly and impartially examined into, they will most probably be found to be merely combinations of men under the denomination of Threshers, in opposition to the Orange system, and especially, as we have heard, against some old United Irishmen, who have latterly obtained admission into some Orange Lodges, and who are reproached by their old associates for their change.

We regret to see the commencement of those feuds at markets and fairs, which have so long disgraced other parts of Ireland, but from which we have hitherto been in general happily free. We wish to see the authority of the laws strictly and impartially enforced, and adopt the maxim of Sir Francis Burdett, "Keep to the laws." But if government are sincerely desirous to repress all outrages, let them resolutely put down and discountenance the Orange system, and then the antagonist parties, assuming the name of Defenders, Threshers, or any similar denominations, may the more readily be suppressed by the impartial distribution of even-handed justice.

A petition of the Protestants of Ireland under the sanction of a committee composed as expressed in a note,* is now forwarded for sig-

natures to the several parts of Ireland. In our succeeding numbers we design to publish the names of such who shall subscribe the petition in the northern counties, as far as the persons having the care of obtaining signatures in the respective districts, shall enable us to do so by forwarding to us lists for that purpose, a favour which we solicit from them. It is desirable to register an authentic list of those, who, in the present crisis come forward in the cause of justice and sound policy. Many Protestants sign, but timidity, venality and prejudices prevent others. Where prejudices are sincere, how mistaken soever they may be, the right of private judgment is to be respected, and every allowance made for a difference in opinion, but for timidity or venality, the same excuses cannot be admitted. If a man have a decided opinion, he should express it all risques, and not be swayed by selfish motives.†

Viscount Lismore—Hon. George Ponsonby, M.P.—Hon. James Butler, M.P.—Rt. Hon. Henry Grattan, M.P.—Rt. Hon. M. Fitzgerald, M.P.—Robert La Touche, esq. M.P.—Richard Wogan Talbot, esq. M.P.—Peter La Touche, jun. M.P.—James Daly, esq.—John Taylor, esq.—Edward Taylor, esq.

† The people called Quakers generally refuse to sign, and in an instance, where the right of private judgment was exerted, censure was thrown on the person who subscribed the petition, by some of his more rigid brethren. This is the tyranny of a sect exercised on the right of private judgment. The language is, "Do not meddle in any act of a party. The society ought to be so grateful for the many favours they have received from government, as not to do any thing displeasing to them." If the favours conferred had been greater than they are, for Quakers certainly labour under many disabilities and inconveniences, on account of their religious sentiments, and which in justice ought to be removed in common with all other restrictions on

* The following compose the Committee for conducting the petition of the Protestants of Ireland :

The Earl of Meath—Earl of Granard—

The ephemeral popularity of the Marquis of Downshire has nearly run its little course. His letters missive to the 'Squires of Down manifest in a strong point of view the conduct of Aristocrats, who, in all their divisions and subdivisions of party, consider the freedom of election as subservient to their own interests. Wishing from policy to avoid the expenses of a contested election in the county of Down, this too highly praised Marquis, disregarding the rights of the legal electors, and like others of the Aristocratic squad, *counting the people as nothing*, issues his letters to his followers, that having come to a compromise with his hereditary opponents, he wishes there should be no contest for the county. Such ever will be the case, while the people are not true to themselves, and permit themselves to be branded like sheep, and brought at an election into the pens of the man, on whose land they reside. In the last

opinion, it is a completely selfish motive to decline to assist others in the restoration to their rights, in gratitude for exclusive benefits conferred on themselves; and as to the cant word of party, it ought to be remembered, that party means an association of a number of persons, for the purpose of attaining some end, and before party can be condemned, the purposes to be accomplished ought to be considered. A party is either good, bad, or indifferent, according to the ends they have in view. Doubtless, many of this society, if they followed their individual inclination, would join in an act of justice to our Catholic brethren, but the fear of the censure of a coercive discipline, and of the power of a church, a principle strongly inculcated on them, and with no sect possessing greater influence, restrains the spontaneous acts of the individuals. It is a blessing to be emancipated from the *Bastile of a sect*, and to be at liberty to exercise an independent judgment, unbiassed by the opinions of Popes, councils, convocations, general assemblies, or yearly meetings.

struggle for the County of Down, we ask where was independence displayed? How many tenants exercised an independent judgment? There was an array of peer against peer, and of 'squire against 'squire, while the fortunes of the house of Hill once more triumphed. But there was no virtuous principle discovered, and the PEOPLE ought ever to keep aloof from such contests, and leave aristocracy to dash against aristocracy. It is not to be wondered that electors should under such management find no interest in the event, and begrudging to serve another at their private expense, meanly submit to have their charges defrayed by the candidate, or his party. But let the rights of election be restored according to the constitution to the individual electors, then things will be different, and we should have a PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, beginning as it ought, at the base, and laid on a permanent foundation. It is idle declamation to talk against the errors of government, unless we endeavour to procure a commencement of reform among the people themselves, for a corrupt people and a corrupt government act reciprocally on each other, to the full production of the completely putrifying mass. A virtuous people would soon compel the rulers to be honest, but as long as the people permit, the officers of government will pursue their selfish ends.

It is pleasing to see that a spirit is gradually forming in England, in support of the real independence of elections. To have independent members of parliament, they must be returned free of expense by their constituents, that they may not sacrifice their independence by the injury of their private fortunes before they enter the house. Sir Francis Burdett was returned free of expense by the electors of Westmin-

ster. His brother Jones Burdett is invited on the same terms by the electors of Southwark. Although Montagu Burgoyne failed in Essex on this plan, he again offers himself on the condition of being returned free of expense, promising, as he would not buy them, so he would not sell them.

Sir Samuel Romilly in return for his services in the cause of humanity, and his exertions to mitigate the severity of the criminal code, being invited by the citizens of Bristol, to offer himself a candidate for that city, at the next general election, replies that he only consents on condition of being returned free of expense. His excellent letter to the electors of Bristol, will be found among the documents, as will also a blunt but good letter on the same subject from William Hallett to the freeholders of Berkshire. We ardently desire that these beginnings may cause the subject of parliamentary representation to be viewed in its proper light, as a subject fixed by the constitution as solely belonging to the represented and the representative, independent of all aristocratic influence, unconstitutionally assumed by landlords.

The Common Council of London refuse a grant in aid of Dr. Bell's plan of schools, on the just principle, that his exclusive and excluding system is not the best adapted to produce the benefits of education to a community, in which so many exercise the right of private judgment in opposition to the establishment.

The deep rooted, opposition to all reform by the men now in power, is clearly evinced by Spencer Perceval's conduct on two recent occasions in the house of Commons.

The Reversion Bill has by his prosecution been thrown out in the Commons, although a bill of a similar import has frequently passed through that house, but been reject-

ed by the Lords. This bill would not have done much, but still it would have effected some good. By it ministers would have been restrained from anticipating the fund of influence, and consequently have had fewer means of corruption immediately in their power, and there would be also a better opportunity for abolishing sinecures, when they were not, as is now frequently the case, two or three deep in succession.

A member, — Eden moved for a committee to inquire into the civil list. The committee was granted, but the minister secured a sufficient number of his adherents in the nomination, and refused powers to the committee to call for persons and papers, as might be necessary for their information. With such crippled powers, the mover of the committee in a spirited manner, declined to be further concerned, and gave up the farce of amusing the people, by appearing to do something, while no effectual examination would be allowed to take place. If further evidence had been wanting, these two circumstances sufficiently demonstrate, that under such management no reform can be effected. It has been a delusion often practised, when a radical parliamentary reform was called for, to amuse by some pretences of giving what was called economical reform. Even this poor pretext to save appearances is now given up, and the hauteur of the unbending Perceval triumphs with the aid of his hollow majorities. It altogether furnishes a lamentable display of the state of public opinion, for to a considerable degree the conduct of the leaders of parties affords an index of the public mind. Public men are just such, as the people permit them to be, and if the heads of the respective parties differ from each other, in name chiefly, and in principle very little, it may safely

be assumed that the cause proceeds from the great body of the people being sunk in corruption or apathy. "Put not your trust in princes," was a maxim of ancient policy, and the events of the present times do not make it less appropriate at this day.

Our external relations are not more prosperously situated, or afford more comfort in anticipating the future prospect, than our miserable, and to use a late phrase, all but hopeless internal state. The assembly of Jamaica has in a petition to the Prince Regent * described the state of the island, suffering a full proportion of the commercial distress of the times. These distresses partially proceed from general causes, and are partly inseparable from the wretched policy of slave keeping. The unhappy West India islands contain in this system, the seeds not only of present misery, but of many future dreadful evils. Dominica holds out an awful example.

The United States of North America are sounding the note of preparation for war, which appears now inevitable unless Great Britain recede from her orders in council, and give up the impressment of American sailors. There is a danger of the people in these countries being deceived through the violent misrepresentations of a few federal prints in America, and which according to the general systematic plan of deception of our press at home, are industriously palmed on them as the general voice of America. If on this occasion the people suffer themselves to be hoodwinked, they may probably see their error too late, after their rulers have precipitated them not reluctantly into the war. A decided majority of the people in the United States may be fairly as-

med to be determined to resist what they consider British aggression. They have their fears of France, but they suffer more at present from Britain, and the party, neither French nor British, but genuinely American, is constituted by a great majority of the American population, through their vast extent of territory. The language of the Speaker of the house of Representatives (Clay), in his speech in committee, in answer to supplicatory addresses of members on the other side, in favour of Britain, is deserving of attention, as indicating the general sentiment pervading America on this subject. "Let Britain relinquish her own impudent conduct, and then lay claim to sympathy, in fighting the battles of the world!"

The partial importation bill, permitting the introduction of goods really purchased by Americans, prior to February, 1811, and which, even if it had been carried, could not be considered as a pacific measure, but merely an act of accommodation to their own citizens, has been postponed in such a manner, as to render it probable, that the measure will be finally abandoned.

The revolution in Spanish America is consolidating. The United States sanction it by the acknowledgment of their independence. The two vast continents of America bid fair to be fully separated from European influence, and extrinsic rule: an event which the politician anticipates, the philosopher pronounces just, and the philanthropist hails as tending to add to the happiness of the human race.

Affairs in Spain and Portugal continue to disappoint all parties. Events have not hitherto justified either the expectations of the doubters of success, or the sanguine prognosticators of it. In fact, possession of the Peninsula has been longer

* For the petition, see the Documents.

retained, than the former had calculated on, and appearances do not yet render sanguine hopes of ultimate success on the part of the British and their allies justifiable, on the principles of probability, founded on rational calculation. Ciudad Rodrigo has been taken by storm, and Lord Wellington gets an addition of £2000 a-year, and is advanced in the British peerage to the rank of Earl. He is besides invested by the Spaniards with the title of Duke of Ciudad Rodrigo. This advantage over the French is vastly over-balanced by the capture of Valencia, in which General Blake and a large number of prisoners are taken by Suchet, for which he has obtained from his master the title of Duke of Albufera, with a large estate annexed. The fall of Alicant may be anticipated. They must be sanguine indeed, and possess not a little share of callibility, who on a calm review of these events, still retain a strong confidence in the wisdom of the councils, which dictated the system which has been pursued in the Peninsula.

It is rumoured, that Bernadotte, on the part of Sweden, has made a proposal to the British government for a truce, that he may offer his mediation for a general peace, and that he has made a similar offer of mediation to Bonaparte. In the present temper of the times, during a triumph of the war-faction, there is no room for hope, that such an overture will meet with any success.

The restrictions on the Prince Regent have expired. He has disappointed the hopes of many, by resolving to continue the most of the present ministers in office. Lords Grey and Grenville on being solicited to form a coalition, have, to their honour, refused. With a retention of

men, we are to expect a continuance of the old system of measures, and of course an opposition to the Catholic claims! Alas! for our country! Princes appear resolved not to be instructed, or to take warning from the passing events. The princes of the houses of Bourbon continued their career of folly to the last. The friends to peace and stability wish most anxiously for a radical reform, as best conducive to these purposes. They deprecate all violence, and desire to see no other force exerted, but the force of public opinion. To it, if properly and calmly exerted, all governments would ultimately have to bow. It can scarcely be repeated too frequently, it is a truth incessantly to be inculcated, that a virtuous people can only insure a virtuous government, as they alone deserve it.

DOCUMENTS.

To the Gentlemen, Clergy, Freeholders, and Freemen of the City of Bristol.

GENTLEMEN,

A Stranger to the city of Bristol, and having scarcely a personal acquaintance with any one of its inhabitants, it would have been very great presumption in me spontaneously to have offered myself as a candidate to represent you in Parliament. I had not the vanity to imagine that my humble endeavours faithfully to discharge my duty as a member of the House of Commons, would have attracted your notice. It has, however, been represented to me by some highly-respectable electors of Bristol, that the manner in which I have sought to discharge that duty, has been looked upon by many of you in so favourable a light, that they were desirous that I should be proposed to become one of your Representatives. By this intimation alone it is that I am encouraged to say, that to be returned to Parliament by your free and independent suffrages, is an honour which I should prize more highly than any other that could be conferred on me. The very circumstance of my being known to you